

## **Massachusetts Statewide Community Transportation Coordination Conference May 5, 2015**

### **Keynote Address: MassDOT's Vision for Coordinated Transportation By Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary and CEO**

Secretary Stephanie Pollack opened her remarks with a personal story about her brother born prematurely in 1957 with multiple physical and intellectual challenges. In an era before special education laws, her parents ensured he attended mainstream classrooms all through school. He went on to college and a group home before moving into a satellite apartment near community amenities, like the library, that he could easily access. The biggest obstacle the family faced was transportation. Her brother couldn't drive, hated to ask for rides and taxis in New Jersey were not allowed to cross county lines. Her family was shaped by these challenges, influencing the careers she and all her siblings pursued. The notion of accessibility, which is achieved by a combination of mobility, proximity and connectivity, is what we should all be striving for. She voiced her support for community transportation and coordination efforts.

She went on to compare the traditional notion of what transportation "is" – roads, buses, sidewalks, etc. – versus what transportation "does" – gets us where we need to go. Transportation providers tend to think in terms of "operations" where people think in terms of "service." Service is how operations affect the people who use it. She stressed the importance of choosing the right metrics to assess how users experience their transportation. MassDOT has traditionally focused on projects, but needs instead to focus on investments and calculating the Return on Investment (ROI) by assessing why we are making that particular investment. Problem solving is ultimately about people and places, which creates a community. Community should be at the center of all transportation, not just "community transportation". She urged the audience to think about connected communities at both the neighborhood level for walkability, proximity, and amenities and between areas where you need transit and other connections.

In response to audience questions, Secretary Pollack described this year as the ideal time to look ahead since 2015 is a planning year for the state's Long Range Transportation Plan for 2040. She stated we need to plan for transportation, not do transportation planning. MassDOT historically thinks and plans in terms of projects, but needs we need to imagine what we want the Commonwealth to look like in 25 years in terms of networks and connectivity. In 1990 we didn't have cell phones or the internet. She also talked about the need for MassDOT to buy smarter, and particularly for big IT projects which take a long time to get to the end game. In a similar vein, the Secretary also described her hopes for her tenure at MassDOT to change the discourse and to spend smarter and manage better. The result should be better service and a transportation system that works for everyone.